



GHAMIDI CENTER OF ISLAMIC LEARNING

An Initiative of Al-Mawrid U.S.

www.ghamidi.org

From Islam to islam

Story of a journey from seeking out, to learning from Ustad Ghamidi, to departing from his thought, and to the beyond

Farhad Shafti

Age Group: 16+

Language: English

Duration

60 minutes / 7 weeks

Prerequisites

None.

Course Description

The module comprises of seven sessions. Each session will have around 40 minutes of talk with some interactive discussion where applicable, followed by around 20 minutes of Q&A. The sessions are in a logical sequential order, taking the audience through a journey that the speaker went through.

PLEASE NOTE:

Session 5 will be 2 hours long.

Session One:

Javed Ahmad Ghamidi's approach to understanding Islam and its strengths and features

In this session I will explain what I consider to be the strengths and the praiseworthy features of Ustad Ghamidi's approach to understanding Islam. I will share part of my own experience of learning from the Ustad and how I am still benefiting from his teachings. I will use some of the findings of my PhD which was on the Farahi school of thought, to explain these strengths and features in a systematic way.

Session Two:

General criticism of some of our contemporary reformist scholars

Many years ago I wrote an article titled "What Does It Take for a Non-Traditional Scholar of Islam to be Open Minded and Academic". There, I looked at a few points that I thought needed attention and possibly improvement in the method of teaching and thinking of some of the non-traditional contemporary scholars. Although the article was written generally, I picked up many of these points while benefiting from Utad Ghamidi's teaching and observing his circle of students and associates. In this session, I will share a more updated and detailed version of what I wrote in this article.

Session Three:

The Shari'ah Law in Islam, Static or Dynamic?

Whether the Shari'ah Law was supposed to stay as it was first revealed or was supposed to be dynamic and evolve with time is a well-known debate among the contemporary Muslim scholars. In this session, I will bring some of the main arguments of the two camps, discuss the consequences of each view, and explain why I prefer the latter view (in support of dynamic Shari'ah Law). I will also explain why even based

on the first view (i.e. static shari'ah), appreciating some of the historical backgrounds can change our understanding of some of the religious rules.

Session Four:

The religion of Islam, some fundamental questions

This session is devoted to raising some fundamental questions about God, religion, Islam and the Qur'an. There will not be any attempt from me to answer any of these at this session, but I will be keen to hear the answers that may be offered by the audience and to evaluate them and possibly ask follow up questions.

Session Five (2 hours):

The specific and the universal aspects of Islam and the Quran

This will be the core session of this module and requires a total of two hours to cover the subject. In this session I will explain, based on my understanding of the Qur'an, whether the Book is giving us a pluralistic view of religion or an exclusivist view. On the basis of the first, there can be more than one path towards success in the hereafter and all can equally be beneficial, while on the basis of the second, only one religion (e.g. Islam) is the acceptable or the most acceptable path towards success in the hereafter. The session will be based on my article "The True Meaning of Universality of the Qur'an". My main conclusion will be the same, although I will be presenting my most updated views and thought on the subject. This session may answer some of the questions that I raised in session four.

Session Six:

The way ahead: Authenticity of the Qur'an – Concept of Revelation – Concept of God

How well founded are some of our inherited assumptions about the authenticity of the Qur'an that we have today, nature of 'revelation' (wahy), and therefore God, as we know Him? In this session, I will try to share with the audience some of the main ongoing research and thinking of a few non-Muslim scholars (re authenticity of the Qur'an) and a few traditional and contemporary Muslim scholars (re concept of revelation) about the nature of revelation. I will then express my own views briefly and discuss the implications of this on our understanding of 'God'. This session too may answer some of the questions that were raised in session four.

Session Seven:

The benefits of staying with Javed Ahmad Ghamidi's approach, Summary and Discussion

In this session, I will explain why despite my own departure from Ustad Ghamidi's thought and despite my criticisms, I still think that his approach and his understanding of Islam is very beneficial for Muslims

today, in particular ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah. This will make a very brief part of the session. The rest of the session is devoted to any comments, criticisms and questions from the audience.